

Evaluation Report Brief

Living Arts: Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts Program

What is the community challenge?

The first years of life are the most important for lifelong development, and preschool achievement is a predictor for later school success. While Head Start has a positive impact on the low socio-economic status pre-k children who participate, they still enter kindergarten substantially below national averages on assessments.

What is the promising solution?

The Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts Program focuses on improving children's school readiness, creating a system change in instructional delivery, and influencing parents to use new strategies at home by bringing arts-infused education to Head Start, Early Head Start, and kindergarten classrooms. The program includes direct service to children, their teachers, caregivers, parents, and teaching artists through mini-residencies, teacher training, artist training, and family workshops.

Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund

Intervention: Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts Program

Subgrantee: Living Arts

Intermediary: United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Focus Area: Youth Development

Focus Population: Low socio-economic status pre-kindergarten children ages three months to six years

Community Served: Detroit, MI

What was the purpose of evaluation?

The evaluation of the Living Arts Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts program began in 2012 and concluded in 2017. The evaluation focused on determining if the Living Arts Detroit Wolf Trap program had an impact on advancing school readiness in pre-kindergarten children aged three and four. The evaluation utilized a quasi-experimental mixed design approach that included a pre/post-test assessment and a randomly selected comparison group drawn from a matched set of comparison schools.

What did the evaluation find?

As part of the Living Arts implementation of the Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts program, Living Arts engaged in a rigorous evaluation to determine the impact of the program on the children that received services. The evaluation included an implementation study and an impact study that focused on participants' school readiness as measured by the HighScope COR-A assessment tool.

The study found that:

- In Project Year 4, the treatment group had statistically significantly higher scores on the COR-A total score and all subscales, with a mix of effect sizes from small to medium.
- In Project Year 5, children who received treatment scored statistically significantly higher than the comparison students on five of the eight COR-A subscales (Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language, Literacy, and Communication, Science and Technology, and Social Studies) and on the COR-A total score (small effect size on average—partial eta-squared =.01).
- The Teacher Survey indicated that the teachers will use the program strategies in the future.
- The self-reported parents survey indicated that parents consistently understood that the arts support learning and that parents will use the program's methods at home.

Notes on the evaluation

The Wolf Trap intervention was administered to 228 students in 25 classrooms across the five years of the SIF grant. The first three years were focused primarily on implementation and formative evaluation activities. Impact findings are based on observations from Years 4 and 5 that compared over 1,000 students receiving the Wolf Trap curriculum to a similar number of students randomly selected from a set of matched comparison schools. However, the report does not clearly specify how comparison schools were selected and baseline equivalency was not obtained after matching. As such, the study was unable to hit its targeted moderate level of evidence. It is important to note that though baseline equivalency was not obtained the differences favored the control group, suggesting that the effects of the intervention are stronger than estimated in this study. For further information on the design and analyses, peer reviewed findings from this evaluation can be obtained at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.01.003>

How is Living Arts using the evaluation findings to improve?

The subgrantee, Living Arts, is continuing to deliver the Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts program even though Social Innovation Fund funding for the program ended in 2017. Classroom teachers involved are highly engaged and found the teaching methodology to be “very useful”. Many reported using the methodologies in their classrooms, pointing to a systematic change in their pedagogy.

Evaluation At-a-Glance

Evaluation Design: Quasi-Experimental Matching Design

Study Population: Low socio-economic status pre-kindergarten children ages 3 and 4

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This Evaluation’s Level of Evidence*: Preliminary

*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/research>.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the U.S. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.